

characterizes the entire volume. The editors consulted an incredible number of sources — census reports, church records, city directories, immigration and passenger lists, to name only a few — on both sides of the Atlantic to trace not only the writers and their families, but also to authenticate statements, dates, and places mentioned in the letters. The volume, which includes helpful maps, a useful appendix of weight, measure, and currency equivalents, and a detailed index, deserves high marks for design, production, and translation.

The letters themselves reveal a number of common themes. Nearly all demonstrate the importance of continuing ties to Germany. Immigrant letters were catalysts in promoting or discouraging chain migration, and the letters detail the filial, cultural, and financial dynamics which influenced Germans on both sides of the Atlantic. Many immigrant correspondents also remarked on other shared experiences and perceptions: the difficulty of communicating in an English-speaking country; the high prices of food and clothing compared to Germany; and differing cultural practices. One example is the divergent styles of American and German celebrations of the Christian Sabbath. "You also have to get used to doing without Sunday revels," Matthias Dorgathen wrote to his family from Masilon, Ohio in 1881, "because Sundays everything's shut, saloons and businesses in general.... Here Saturday night is Sunday, on Sundays there's nothing going on," (428, 430).

Difficulty becoming acculturated was another common theme, though the writers demonstrated a variety of experiences. Some immigrants saw few differences in their new circumstances. Heinrich Moller, for instance, frequently remarked in letters to German relatives written from Cumberland, Maryland, during the 1860s and 1870s, that "In America everything is just the same as it is in Germany." (211) Most, however, agreed with Engel

Winkelmeier, a domestic servant who wrote to her parents from Brooklyn, New York, in 1867 that "it's a different world here." (575) At their best, the letters reveal much about this different world, shedding light on both the immigrants' attempts to adjust to their new lives and the society which they confronted. Many writers commented on new and unaccustomed opportunities for economic and social advancement. Writing to family and friends in 1882, Pittsburgh laborer Christian Kirst, for instance, compared Germany to his new home:

Things here are quite different from over there, here it doesn't matter who you are, here the banker knows the beggar, even our Peter has the son of a banker as a friend ... If a man comes here who has some means he can do a good business, here it isn't like over there, here you can do what you want, here it is a free country, here is the land of Canaan where milk and honey flow! ... I've already saved more here and lead a better life with my family than even the best is able to over there... (476, 478)

Regrettably, not all of the letters in the collection are as stirring or revealing as Kirst's. This is probably the volume's one major flaw: in attempting to address both a general and a scholarly audience, the editors wound up pleasing neither completely. General readers will find the introduction lengthy and overly technical. Many of the letter series also will not enthrall non-specialists, as the entries tend to be tedious rather than "entertaining, perhaps even gripping," (45) as the editors had hoped.

Different problems lessen the volume's appeal to scholars. In addition to focusing on emigration and adaptation, the editors intended to make "a contribution to the history of the inarticulate, history from the bottom up, the history of everyday life." (30) In general, they succeed admirably in this, but their editorial

policy of abridging letters by editing such things as "long lists of prices, ... ritualized pious reflections, ... [and] endless lists of persons to whom the letter-writer wishes to send his or her best regards" (46) diminishes the volume's usefulness to anyone interested in using the letters for further research. Much of what was eliminated, it would seem from their brief summaries of elisions, is the material necessary for writing systematic social history. Obviously, difficult editorial decisions had to be made to keep the volume readable and at a manageable length. For social historians investigating religion, gender, kinship networks, patterns of consumption, and other topics of current interest, however, the editors' choices often prove exasperating. These reservations must be tempered, though, by acknowledging the wealth of material which they did manage to include. While they could not, to paraphrase an American president popular among German immigrants, please all of the people all of the time, Kamphoefner, Helbich, and Sommer have made an important and impressive contribution to our understanding of immigration and German-American culture with *News from the Land of Freedom*. ■

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Sternwheelers on the Great Kanawha River

By Gerald W. Sutphin and Richard A. Andre

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STEAMBOAT enthusiasts are a special breed of old-time transportation fanatics, needing to be blessed with good imaginations. Railroad, automobile, and even airplane buffs can view the objects of their affection in museums, and ride in surviving relics, now mostly tourist attractions like the Strasburg Rail-

road, or like the Model T Fords putt-putting down Main Street in a Fourth of July parade. For the most part steamboat people must content themselves with books similar to this one. Western river sternwheelers which once plied the Mississippi and Ohio rivers and their tributaries by the thousands in the nineteenth century and in decreasing numbers in the first three decades of the twentieth are now reduced to a very few, and the steamboat buff or serious historian must pursue his/her icon through the eyes of memorabilia collectors or through the reminiscences of the few remaining steamboat men. It is true that there has been a revival of popular interest in steamboats, and replicas of sternwheelers powered by Diesel engines are now a feature of river city water fronts. The *Delta Queen* and the *Belle of Louisville* (pictured in the book), survivors of a much earlier day, are now the last of a lost ingenious technology.

Sternwheelers on the Great Kanawha River has been lovingly assembled by two friends of the sternwheeler. Gerald Sutphin began his collection of photographs and memorabilia in the early 1960s. He has become an authority on inland river transportation, working with the Huntington Museum of Art to produce a major exhibit, "Ohio River Odyssey," and contracting with the Smithsonian to produce a series of short programs on inland river transportation. Richard Andre is a West Virginian and student of local and military history who became "hooked on steamboats" (his words) after a ride at the age of six on the *Gordon Greene*.

The Kanawha River bisects West Virginia and has historically been a water passageway from the Alleghenies to the Ohio. Andre traces the early geography and history of the river, from the canoes of the Indians who used the river as a high road, to

the flatboats of the white settlers, carrying salt from the salt furnaces of the valley down the Kanawha to the West. Later keelboats and flatboats carrying farm produce, coal, lumber, and other merchandise moved cargoes both ways.

The first steamboat on the Kanawha did not reach Charleston until 1820, but from then on, especially after improvements to the river eliminated shoals, both freight and passenger traffic were heavy; by 1830 fairly regular packet service between Charleston and Cincinnati had been established. Steamboat traffic and river improvements were stimulated by the valuable salt and mineral deposits in the Kanawha Valley. Sternwheelers were used on the Kanawha by both sides in the Civil War, the river flowing as it did in the midst of an area that was fought over and controlled first by one side and then the other.

This early pre-photographic history is illustrated with old woodcuts, reproductions of newspaper clippings, letters, and documents of various sorts such as bills of lading. In contrast, the subsequent history of the river steamboats from about the end of the Civil War to the present is lavishly illustrated with photographs of boats, personalities, steamboat interiors, and photocopies of memorabilia. The earliest known photograph of a steamboat on the Kanawha is the photo of the *Virginia Home* in 1858, reproduced on p. 25. The war also marked the approximate date after which the all-purpose steamboat carrying both passengers and freight gave way to the towboat loaded with salt, coal, and other bulk freight. Meanwhile, railroads were gaining in efficiency and popularity, and river traffic began its downward slide.

The authors have included good river stories with their photos — some tragic, some comic. For example, the story of *Kanawha Belle*,

which went over a dam near Charleston in 1901 in a blinding snowstorm, wrecking the boat and killing nine, is told by newspaper clippings and pictures of the wreck. The purchase of the *Bedford* in Nashville by Captain Gordon C. Greene is another anecdote; the *Bedford* became the first of the famous Green Line Steamers, the *Delta Queen* being the last. One interesting and unique sequence of photos shows the construction of the *Otto Marmet* in 1897, a typical Kanawha sternwheeler. It is a valuable series of photographs, for it is rare to see the bare bones of these river boats or details of their building. Replicas of posters advertising "Moonlight Cruises" and other excursions appear in the twentieth century as regular packet service faded away and the passenger-carrying sternwheeler became entertainment rather than transportation.

The book is thus essentially a pictorial sampling of Sutphin's archives as well as those of museums, libraries, and individuals with river steamboat collections, credited where necessary. One important omission is an index, especially to steamboat names; this would be a great help to researchers seeking to document the social history of this era and this locale, or even to locate a photograph of a specific steamboat. Steamboat and regional river enthusiasts will enjoy the book and add it to their collections, but it should be treated as anecdotal history, an entertaining and attractive supplement to solid historical scholarship. The casual reader, however, will page through the volume, become immersed in all the wonderful photographs and tid-bits of history, and come away with a nostalgia and a wish for more. ■

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